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SOME PARTICULARS
OF
THE LIFE
OF THE LATE
GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.



T. Gainsborough pinx.

J. Hall sculp. Engraver to his Majesty.

SOME PARTICULARS
OF
THE LIFE
OF THE LATE *A*
GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

Written by himself,

AND DELIVERED BY HIM TO

RICHARD JACKSON, Esq.

(One of his Executors,)

FOR PUBLICATION AFTER HIS DECEASE.

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SOME PARTICULARS

THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

GEORGE GOLMAN ESQ.

AND HIS TRIP TO THE EAST



RICHARD

SOME PARTICULARS
OF
THE LIFE
OF THE LATE
GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

Richmond, Dec. 4th, 1787.

FOR some years past I have entertained an idea of leaving behind me some particulars of my life, which I flattered myself might not be quite uninteresting, or unentertaining; or at least prove more satisfactory than the anecdotes retailed by some chance biographer, who might perhaps be induced to confer on me the honours that have lately been as liberally bestowed on persons of as little importance. Much business, much illness, and perhaps

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some idleness, have from time to time protracted my commencement of the work, and thinking it not impossible, nor indeed improbable, that the same causes may still prevail, so as at least to hinder the completion of it, I now sit down to give an account of some circumstances, touching what has been commonly supposed to be the leading feature in my character; but in which the world has been most grossly deceived, and mistaken, as the following narration and documents will sufficiently testify.

It has, I know, long been taken for granted, that such was the strength of my predilection for theatrical possessions, that I would in spite of all competition, and without hesitation, forego all other expectations, however magnificent or alluring; and that at a certain æra of my life, about
 twenty

twenty years ago, this position was most fully verified.

Nothing but my respect and gratitude for the memory of those, from whose bounty I still derive a considerable part of my income, determined me to abide and patiently endure the contempt and obloquy that such a received opinion brought upon me, lest by vindicating myself from causeless slander, I might appear willing to throw a stain on those who had done much for me, merely because they had not done more.

This opinion of my character has been chiefly founded on two propositions, both of which, with as much delicacy as the truth will admit, I shall shew to be groundless.

The first of these propositions is, that by my literary pursuits, and dramatic compositions,

positions, I lost the favour and affection of the Earl of BATH.

The second is, that by my purchase of a fourth of the patent of Covent Garden theatre, I knowingly and voluntarily forfeited the intended bequest of the Newport estate under the will of General PULTENEY.

That I had an early taste and relish for polite literature, and particularly for compositions of the stage, is most true; nor will I pretend to deny that I was betrayed into youthful follies and irregularities, which involved me in temporary inconveniencies and distresses. To extricate myself from the embarrassments that those follies, ill suited to narrow circumstances, brought upon me, I had recourse to my pen, which was then rarely used, dramatically,

tically, or otherwise, but with a view to profit; the Earl of BATH, however, was so little displeased with these efforts, that he even countenanced and encouraged them, and often deigned to consider them as the earnest of something better that was to follow. So dear, indeed, did he hold me, that he has not only in words and in writing told me that he considered me as his second son, but, in several wills and testaments executed during that period, and during the life of my dear friend and kinsman, Lord PULTENEY, absolutely testified that he regarded me in that light; nor did any of my theatrical productions abate his affection, or in the least tend to alter his intentions. A more fatal event was the cause of such alterations; I mean the early and unexpected death of Lord PULTENEY. From that moment he new modelled his will, in which he still made
a hand-

a handsome provision for me, but left it to the discretion of General PULTENEY to consign, or not consign to me the estate, which he had, in many preceding wills, absolutely devised to me, in case of the death of his only son, Lord PULTENEY.

The little that has been already said on this subject, is, perhaps, more than sufficient to refute the charge contained in the first proposition; but it may not be amiss to speak of one or two circumstances, before we entirely dismiss it. I have mentioned, that Lord BATH considered me as his second son; and, indeed, his avowed partiality for me, induced many persons, not intimately acquainted with the history and connections of the family, to think me really so, and of consequence to report it as a fact. Not to dwell on the grossness of the supposition, implying a criminal intercourse

tercourse between his lordship and his wife's sister, there were certain physical impossibilities in the case. My mother went over to my father, who was resident at Florence, four or five years before I was born. Mr. PULTENEY and his family were in England; I had a sister born there two years before me, so that neither of us, natives of Florence, could derive our origin from my mother's brother in law, considering the unfortunate intervention of the Alps and the Mediterranean. We had, indeed, each of us, the honour of a royal godfather and godmother, as children of a British plenipotentiary, from whom we took our several names of GEORGE and CAROLINE.

The other circumstances referred to above, come closer to the point in question, and, indeed, form a necessary chain
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in the succeeding narrative; and it gives me no small satisfaction to be able to seize this opportunity of paying a due tribute of affection and respect to a most ingenious, learned, and worthy man. The story will speak his elogium. The man I mean was my most esteemed and honoured friend the late Mr. BOOTH of Lincoln's Inn.

It was Mr. BOOTH who first acquainted me, very soon after the irretrievable loss of poor Lord PULTENEY, of the new arrangements of Lord BATH's affairs. His lordship, however, says he, assures me he has taken care of you; but that care, I dare say, will be very unequal to his original intentions. The world supposes, that the death of Lord PULTENEY is a great event in your fortune. You and I know the contrary; and if you have a mind, I will still endeavour to enable you
to

to make your fortune another way. Though you are my neighbour in Lincoln's Inn, and have your chambers in the next stair-case to mine, yet I believe you have not hitherto thought of the law so seriously as I have done. If you have talents for the bar, you may make much more money than ever I have made ; my religion has prevented my appearance there; yet my gains have not been inconsiderable, though less than what they have been rated. If you do *not* attend the bar, still the law is no mean resource. I will, if you please, give you a plan of study ; I will shew you every case I ever answered, and explain to you the principles on which I founded my opinions. *My life is wearing; and as I go out of business, I will make it a point to bring you into it.*

This was the substance of what this good friend said to me on this occasion. I

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have every where endeavoured to clothe the matter as near as possible in his own expressions, and to the last words I could almost venture to swear.

Though he had for some time shewed me many civilities, and even marks of friendship, yet I must confess that this touching instance of it almost overcame me.

Penetrated with his kindness, and struck with the nicety of my situation, I seriously determined to avail myself of his most friendly offer, and to follow his advice. Lord BATH, to the day of his death, continued his favour and protection to me. I entered his house as familiarly as my own chambers, and occupied without invitation a place at his table.

On his death, his brother, General PULTENEY, received me as a friend, and gave
me

me to understand that I was *un enfant de famille*, that must not be overlooked or neglected. He told me, that he supposed I should no longer think of the profession to which I had been destined, and made me a present of his chariot. Such a call *from* the bar was too tempting to be resisted, and I accordingly quitted my tye wig, gown, and band, and my chambers at Lincoln's Inn.

I did not, however, roll long in the general's carriage without some rather disagreeable jolts in it. Malice soon began her operations, and endeavoured to prejudice him against me ; yet he continued my friend, and in answer to a letter to him at Tunbridge, (of which I have no copy) he returned me the following comfortable epistle.

Vox audita perit, litera scripta manet.

Dear

Dear COLMAN,

I esteem you very much for your acknowledgment and grateful sense of poor Lord BATH's affection and kindness to you, which has urged you at present (in writing to me,) to express yourself (with the overflowings of an honest heart) in so very obliging a manner, that if I had no other motive, it would be sufficient to make me love you with great cordiality and kindness to my life's end ; but I will over and above assure you, that I have ever loved you, and am persuaded that nothing will alter my affection and opinion of your deserving from me all the good that Lord BATH has visibly designed and wished you to enjoy ; all that can be said further, must be superfluous and unnecessary ; but, let me add, that I shall always be glad of a visit from you : the reason that after the eleventh was mentioned

oned to you for coming here, was from an engagement about that time to the Bishop of ROCHESTER, and would be an hindrance to your being at the same time with me, as my house would be quite full ; but as he makes no longer a stay than a day or two, you then may take your own time and conveniency of obliging me with your company ; being,

Dear COLMAN,

Your's very affectionately,

H. PULTENEY.

Tunbridge, Friday,

Aug. 3d.

The publication of private letters I have ever thought exceptionable, unless some very particular circumstances render it proper and necessary to produce them. In the present instance, I do not see how I can otherwise vindicate my character ; and
therefore

therefore I trust that my memory will not be loaded with reproach, merely for an act of self justification.

Nothing could be more open and direct than the contents of the above letter ; yet some subsequent events, too strong not to be noticed, but yet too minute to be recapitulated, made me conceive it more than barely possible that the General would on some pretence, render void his most explicit and voluntary declaration. Under this persuasion I thought it advisable to secure to myself, if possible, some advantages more solid and permanent, than an annuity which was to vanish with my life, and might render it impossible for me to provide for any survivor,

At this critical time, an offer was made me of a share in Covent Garden theatre, and I had before had the refusal of Mr.

GARRICK'S

GARRICK's share at Drury Lane. Still, however, I did not enter hastily into these undertakings, without attention to the assurances I had received, and which were now put to the test. In March 1767, I signed an agreement with my friend POWELL, and the other intended purchasers of Covent Garden theatre, under a penalty of three thousand pounds, in case of non-performance. I afterwards went to Bath, where I received a letter from General PULTENEY, in answer to one of mine, of which I have no copy, but of which the substance may be collected from his answer, and my reply.

London, Mond. April 27, 1767.

Dear COLMAN,

I have received your letter from Bath, which surprises me not a little, to find in your letters the same jealousy and reproach

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as I met with the last year, from Bath, which were, as I told you then, falsely grounded from malice and curiosity, and now again I am the more convinced of it, for I declare to you, that I never gave any cause, to any one whatsoever, that from any report in your disfavour that I had the least thought of paying any regard to it, nor indeed have any persons, by misrepresenting you, ever taken that liberty to speak of you disadvantageously ; for it is well known the veneration I have for every thing Lord BATH has recommended, and I will assure you over and above, that I have a long rooted disposition in me to befriend you in all things ; yet I can see some things that are not greatly pleasing, as most certainly the letter which you speak of was rather too ludicrous to be writ to an old gentleman, and your friend, which I found fault with, and I did not expect

expect to find it justified, by urging that I went to counsell in disaproving of it, for I think the impropriety of it, would have been disaproved off by a weaker judgem^t. Y^r jealousy about your connection may be founded with reason, but however that may appear to the world, and may give me a concern, I had not deviated from my own good will, nor from L^d BATH's intention. I have thus far explained my affection to you this once; but I hope you will give no farther attention to the malice or curiosity of Bath acquaintance, but to disregard them, as I shall do, if it continues; but otherwise, rest assured y^t I am inclined and very desirous of being always, your faithful

Friend and serv^t,

H. PULTENEY.

I am just going out of town for a day or two.

D

Dear

Dear Sir,

Please to accept my warmest acknowledgments of your kind letter, and give me leave to assure you that I shall ever entertain the most lively sense of your goodness to me on this and every other occasion. The sole meaning of my last was to acquit myself of disrespect or ingratitude: I was conscious that I had never consulted lawyers on the subject there mentioned, which I understood had been insinuated to you, and I thought myself bound in duty to you to wipe off the reproach that such an imputation carried with it.

I am, &c.

From this reply it is evident that the General misunderstood what I had said in my first letter, concerning the consultation of counsel; yet my unhappy attempts
at

at raillery and pleasantry, always so well received by Lord BATH, were rather injudiciously directed to his brother, and my inexperience and want of due knowledge of the world, must be my only apology. It is likely too, that I might be more anxious than ordinary, from a sense of the covenant I had recently, and, perhaps, too hastily entered into, just before I left London. And before my return from Bath, early in May, the expected revolution in the state of Covent Garden had become a subject of public conversation, and of course furnished materials for sundry paragraphs in the news papers. I waited immediately on General PULTENEY, who received me as cordially as ever. We had a full and free conversation on the subject. He expressed neither warmth nor anger on the occasion; but on the whole seemed rather to disapprove of the undertaking. In consequence
of

of which, the following letters past between us.

Dear Sir,

It is almost impossible to conceive or express the uneasiness I have suffered since my return from Bath. The late alteration in my circumstances was of itself sufficient to make me very indifferent about the engagements I had entered into, whatever advantages they might promise ; but the hint you gave me of your disapprobation of them, made me earnestly endeavour to extricate myself. The difficulties that attended those endeavours have only served to add to my uneasiness ; but it is now confidently said, that other bidders will appear, and this, or some other unforeseen circumstance will, I hope, still defeat the purchase ; if not, I have no resource but to break through my engagement, and submit

mit to a penalty of three thousand pounds. Judge then of the distraction of my mind, between the fear of displeasing you, and so disagreeable an alternative.

I will not say any thing in vindication of the undertaking. It seems to be disagreeable to you, and that is enough to make me repent of having thought of it. Before it was proposed to me, I knew that Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT was the original proprietor of this very patent; that Sir RICHARD STEELE had received from the Crown a favour of the same nature; that Sir JOHN VANBURGH not only built the theatre in the Hay-market, but was actually engaged in the management of it, as well as Mr. CONGREVE in that of Lincoln's Inn Fields; not to mention several gentlemen now living of rank and fortune superior to my own, who had formed the like intentions;

intentions ; so that I really did not think of bringing any reflections on myself, or those who had honoured me with their countenance and protection. Any thing that might carry the slightest appearance of disrespect to you was the farthest from my thoughts, and I cannot but be miserable while I suppose myself liable even to the suspicion of it. As to my precipitation in this affair, I feel the consequences of it but too sensibly.

I am, Dear Sir,

With the utmost gratitude and respect,

Your most obliged, and obedient

(Humble serv^t,

G. COLMAN.

June, 7th, 1767.

General Pulteney.

To this letter I was favoured with the following answer.

Dear

Dear COLMAN,

Altho' we have lived in friendship for many years together, yet I cannot expect you will relinquish an agreement in hand at the expence of three thousand pounds, nor shall I cease to be

Your friend & serv^t,

H. PULTENEY.

June 10th. 1767.

Richmond, Monday, June 29th, 1767.

Dear Sir,

When I left London on Saturday, I fully intended to ride to town this morning in order to pay my respects to you before you set out for Tunbridge, but having been seized with a little feverish disorder last night, I am advised not to stir out to day, which reduces me to this method of sending you my best wishes for your good journey,

journey, and your receiving all possible benefit from the waters.

The affair of Covent Garden must now very soon be determined ; and, let it turn out which way it will, I shall ever retain the most grateful sense of your kindness on this occasion. Knowing your sentiments, I had rather not embark in it ; but, should I be driven into it against my inclination, I have still the consolation of reflecting that my sincere respect for you induced me to offer not only to forego all lucrative views in it, but to submit to a penalty that would have swallowed almost the whole of my little fortune ; and that you, with the same spirit of generosity that you have ever exerted towards me, declined such a sacrifice, and reconciled me to myself
by

by assuring me of the continuance of your friendship, the loss of which I should feel as the heaviest misfortune that could befall me.

I beg my best respects to Mr. & Mrs. BURRARD, to whom I wish every pleasure and benefit that Tunbridge can afford, and I remain, with the truest attachment,

Dear Sir,

Your most obliged,

And obed^t serv^t,

G. COLMAN.

Dear Sir,

Before this reaches your hands, you will have been apprised, by the papers, of the completion of an affair, which I do assure you, I have taken every method to avoid, since I understood it was at all dif-

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agreeable

agreeable to you. The other bidders talked so very confidently of advancing upon our price, that, till last Thursday was over, I was never thoroughly persuaded that our party would be the real purchasers; and if our opponents had ever produced the money to back their assertions, it would have afforded me an opportunity to recede, which I should most certainly have embraced. As the matter stood, nothing but the penalty could have procured me that opportunity. I hope you will at least be convinced that I have, on all occasions, told you the truth, and that, in this instance, I have acted with due respect to your opinion, since I have been acquainted with it; only availing myself of the kind assurance you were pleased to give me of the continuance of your friendship, without exacting my submission

mission to a very heavy penalty. Of this and all your other favours, I shall ever retain the deepest and most grateful sense, and remain with the warmest wishes for your health and happiness,

Dear Sir,

Your most obed^t serv^t,

G. COLMAN.

July 2^d, 1767.

In the transcribing the letters of General PULTENEY, the abbreviations, punctuation, and orthography, have been religiously preserved; not from any desire of noting any peculiarities, but merely to mark the strict exactness of the copies. The originals are deposited with my executors, who I hope will as speedily as possible, after entering on the office they have kindly taken upon them, lay these sheets before the public.

From

From these letters, and my answers, of which the rough draughts are also left with my executors, I think will most evidently appear the falsehood and absurdity of the second proposition. I shewed the General's letter of June 10th, in answer to mine of the 7th, to several friends, GARRICK in particular, who all congratulated me on the contents. Truth, however, obliges me to mention, that honest JOSHUA PEELE, a chancery solicitor, long employed and deservedly esteemed by the family, waiting on General PULTENEY on business, soon after his return from Tunbridge, the General said to him "So, COLMAN has got the playhouse at last;" "Yes, says honest PEELE, (who had seen the General's letter) but I am glad to find that you will not cease to be his

his friend ;” “ No, replied the General, I will not cease to be his friend, but I will not be *so much* his friend.” The General had certainly a right to say and do as he pleased ; but it might, perhaps, not unreasonably have been expected that he would have said thus much in his answer to my letter of the 7th June, an answer written scarce three weeks before the purchase was completed. In that answer, he in few, but strong words, states our long friendship, his leave and consent that I should not incur the penalty of my agreement, and his assurance that he would not cease to be my friend. This assurance, connected with his preceding letters, letters particularly shewing *how* he would be my friend, was surely not to be received as a forerunner to his subsequent conduct. Nor can I conceive that General PULTENEY wrote his letter of the 10th of June
under

under such an idea. But however that may be, his last will entirely cancelled all that part of Lord BATH's that he had promised to confirm, relative to my succession to the Newport Estate, which the General commuted for an annuity of four hundred pounds per annum. Soon after General PULTENEY's death, I received a letter from Mr. PULTENEY, which I subjoin, together with my answer; only for the sake of having an opportunity to declare, that I most intirely acquiesce in the truth of the declarations made in his letter, as well as to testify the sincerity of the sentiments expressed in my answer.

Cleveland Row, 28th October, 1767.

S I R,

I am very sensible that as Lord BATH had named you for Mr. NEWPORT's Estate,

tate, the change made by General PULTE-
 NEY's will, tho' in favour of his right
 heirs, must have been a great disappoint-
 ment to you. I do assure you, that I had
 not the least knowledge, till the will was
 read, in what manner the General had set-
 tled that estate, or that he had done me
 the honour to mention my name at all in
 relation to it; and I further assure you,
 that I never in my life mentioned you to
 the General, or did you the smallest preju-
 dice with him.

I easily conceive what I myself should
 feel in your situation, and it will give me
 great pleasure if by any attentions, or by
 any good offices in my power, I can con-
 tribute in any degree to diminish your re-
 gret, which I am sensible it is impossible
 entirely to remove; and Mrs. PULTENEY,
 I can

I can venture to assure you, entertains exactly the same sentiments.

If you will give me leave, I will wait upon you, as soon as the necessary attentions upon this occasion are over, and I shall take every opportunity to convince you, that I am,

S I R,

Your most obedient humble serv^t,

WILLIAM PULTENEY.

S I R,

I am much obliged to you for the kind attention you have been pleased to shew me in your letter: did I imagine that you would believe me, I would say, that I was not at all sorry for General PULTENEY's reversal of Lord BATH's nomination of me for the Newport Estate; but, sorry or not
sorry,

forry, I do most solemnly assure you, that I am not in the least disappointed ; and if I feel any regret on this occasion, it is out of regard to the memory of the General, as I could have wished he had not taken the needless trouble of ratifying more than once under his hand a promise, which upon reflection he did not think it proper to fulfil. Be that as it may, be assured, Sir, that nobody congratulates you on your good fortune more sincerely than myself. I took the liberty of sending to enquire after your health and Mrs. PULTENEY's the day before yesterday, and proposed waiting on you the first opportunity. Please to present my best respects to Mrs. PULTENEY, and believe me,

S I R,

Your most obed^t serv^t,

G. COLMAN.

F I N I S.

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to Mr. ... and ...



Yours most obedt servt
G. C. ...

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